Spring 1959

outposts

40

CONTRIBUTORS

ELIZABETH JENNINGS
MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH
TOM WRIGHT
CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON
MARTIN SCHOLTEN
VERNON SCANNELL
ALEXANDER HENDERSON
JOHN HEATH-STUBBS
MARJORIE BATTCOCK
ANNE C. BLACKMORE
JOHN PRESS
ROY McFADDEN
EDWIN BROCK
CHARLES DURANTY
LEONARD HARLEY
BETTY PARVIN
MATTHEW SIMPSON
PHILIP GARDNER
ALBERT CHAPMAN
JOHN SEYMOUR
MARGARET KING

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

The Big City

WALKING these streets where I am quite unknown
I think of what it means to be alone,
Stripped of surroundings that invite my touch
And then return it like an echoed speech;
I contemplate the safety that we build
As if mere objects meant a life fulfilled—
Windows of sparkling toys and faces pressed
Against the glass like children at the breast
Absorbing, needing—silent transformations
And gentleness presiding over passions.
I watch the women waiting for the warm
Closeness of flesh, love in another name.
Careless, the stars go brittle, not to be
Possessed, even by cold astronomy.
I think of Francis and the leper's kiss
And wonder—was it love or loneliness?

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

An Engraving by Piranesi

THIS arch, like a horse's crest, whose mane of ivy
Hangs a dark fringe across the thews of stone,
Leads to a city of mystery and shadow,
All that lies behind, hidden, the country
Of the mirror, the residue and silt of dreams
Lingering as the seas of sleep recede, evade us.
Beyond their span, strong as the neck of a stallion
Lies the lost world. Yet narrow your eyes, the stones
Glimmer as bones, the arch a glittering socket
Yawns, and the ruin, where the gothic ivy rears
Its narrow viper heads, is a lonely skull
From which the warm human outline shrinks away.

TOM WRIGHT

To X with L

SINCE there are gambits that the game requires
of poets, such as flattery and sighs
and teaching pity how to serve desires
it is imperative to put you wise.
I am not playing with poetic fires
or copywriting this to advertise
my heart's condition that I may procure
your services for the deserving poor.
But literary silence may be read
as insult so I say what must be said.

I'll not compare you to a summer's day
and lose your image in embroidery,
nor catalogue you to your fingernails,
each part with its appropriate cliché,
like something from the bargain basement sales
that's recollected in tranquillity.
The better my description of the view
the more I'd lose the fact that you are you.
Communicate beyond words you will find
my compliments are of another kind.

The Calvin in me bans the old deceit
of using love to play a midwife's part
in giving easy birth to a conceit,
my love is not for tarting up my art
nor will my verse lie pimping at your feet
to generate an artificial heat.
Only a lover born to be a hack
would try to write an aphrodisiac.
I will not offer up for your reception
a pen pusher's emasculate conception.

Now it is said. The answer to your why
is that words cheat their meanings, lose their pride,
droop and can be placated with a lie
or an approximate. But like a tide
my love prowls over you unsatisfied
and unappeasable. Why would I try
to make a greater compliment with letters
even if they were deathless as my betters'.
Seeing that you are quite uniquely you
I know of nothing I'd compare you to.

Scotland.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

Symphony in Black and White

MOULDED in shadow, finally now cast
Out of this white, savage, uneasy city,
A pride of energy is running waste
That slowly festers into enmity.

"Why do they force us to intolerance,
Themselves to the bunched sticks?" In their eyes
I see the shadows of a tribal dance,
Powerless I watch the black death rise.

Death on the news stands overshadows the town
And does not discriminate between lord and outcast,
But truth is mongrel, the first one kicked when down,
Truth is no man's vested interest.

Is it in death only we re-unite
In our true skins and our moderate souls, half-caste,
Falter between two worlds, where total black, total white,
Merge in steady grey with all shade lost?

West Germany.

MARTIN SCHOLTEN

The Dove Descending

AVID in hunchback gloom he sought
An image to dispel the images
Or to compose them, bringing peace.

(As others by a nail-bed trial
Or navel-gazing sheer denial
Had hoped to probe a new dimension.)

And yet the steely-hearted clock
Flaunted its former falsities
Of pulse and season. Time did not stop.

Until unasking once, he found:
The dove descending out of love
As any ordinary bird,

As sparrow on a sooty branch.
—And mind soared upward into the light
With a hundred seldom heard hosannas.

U.S.A.

VERNON SCANNELL

Second Child

THE world, contracted to your needs,
Receives you now, is hushed and warm
But wider than the womb.
As in a stream the sketchy weeds
Waver, your voice in silence floats
And summons instantly white flights
Of tendernesses to your room.

Soon your world will widen, noise
Grow big and blunder through the cool
Cavern where you cooing curl
And crow your elementary joys.
Then pain and fear will bully you,
Nor may your parents rescue you
At once from that bleak school.

For them you bring gay spurts of flowers,
But also bitter herbs and grave
Auguries that they must grieve
As well as praise your ripening powers
Which open weeping gates and doors
Leading to the perilous days
And quays whence ships of exile leave.

And yet, dear egomaniac,
They would not wish you anywhere
But in the harbour of their care.
Your being there has healed a lack,
And even more: love's little space
Has been extended and the harsh
Destructive seas forced back a pace.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON

Graves of the Concentration Camp

THE field is full of white cruciferae:
two acres of identical small crosses
to signpost us toward the one-way road
of those lost travellers in a timeless time
of airless cold and interstellar dark,
of pain repeated, circular despair;
those marchers unadvancing in that waste
of moon-white silent depths of death, their home.

Italy.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

Lament for The "Old Swan", Notting Hill Gate

THE Old Swan has gone. They have widened the road.
A year ago they closed her, and she stood,
The neighbouring houses pulled down, suddenly revealed
In all her touching Gothic pretensiousness
Of turret and pinnacle, like
A stupid and ugly old woman
Unexpectedly struck to dignity by bereavement.

And now she has vanished. The gap elicits
A guarded sentiment. Enough bad poets
Have romanticized beer and pubs.
And those for whom the gimcrack enchantments
Of engraved glass, mahogany, plants in pots,
Were all laid out to please, are fugitive, doubtless,
Nightly self-immersed in a fake splendour.

Yet a Public House perhaps makes manifest also
The hidden City; implies its laws
Of tolerance, hierarchy, exchange.
Friends I remember there, enemies, acquaintances,
Some drabs and drunks, some bores and boors, and many
Indifferent and decent people. They will drink elsewhere.
Anonymous, it harboured
The dreadful, innocent martyrs
Of Megalopolis—Christie or Heath.

Now that's finished with. And all the wide
And sober roads of the world walk sensibly on
Into the featureless Future. But the white swans
That dipped and swam in each great lucid mirror
Remain in the mind only, remain as a lost symbol.

MARJORIE BATTCOCK

On the Way to Brussels

WE travelled early through that August day,
Beyond the balconied and shuttered streets
Where pencil strokes of sunlight lay
In slatted pleats.

Watching in sharpened pleasure country scenes,
We saw the haycocks in this amber light
Stippled to blonde, and through the varied greens
A windmill's tethered flight.

Nearer a city, circled by a wall
High as a prison's, set with flowering grass,
We passed a hospital, the sun's cawl
Warm on the sparkling glass

Of open windows; here the rosy shell
Symbolic of repose suggested calm,
But who heard in the morning bell
Unnamed alarm?

Or did the day to others bring reprieve,
Postponement of a death that patient time
Would introduce again, for those who grieve
The diligent chime

Of an inevitable hour, illusionary relief
Until the body's pending dissolution
Breaks through façades of courage, fear and grief
To absolution.

Past a farm pink as pink sweet-peas
We travelled, but the golden air
Gave back a picture of disease
And of despair.

ANNE C. BLACKMORE

Double Vision

RACING a slow suffocation,
I, in the vast room of a dream,
In this small terror hold up my mirrored
Hand to an oblivious face.

Facing unalterable ego,
I, in this cramped infinity,
Imagine the open door, my life's faith
Tripped in a season's start.

Starting a fox then. And away,
Away, the alter ego—and away,
O my life's faith, facing the vain image
In the freedom of the hills.

Still then, be still, O my heart.
This under the stifled sun remains
Outside the locked walls. This within
Walls only the dead can tell.

JOHN PRESS

February Sun

LYING in bed, weak but all fever gone,
I watch the lukewarm February sun
Level its pale light through my southern window,
Gilding the table and the objects scattered there—
A bowl of fruit, a Macedonian vase,
An oval mirror—and transfiguring
My daughter's mop of moderately golden hair.

She sits on my bed, as radiant and as pagan
As those antique nudes who stare from my glossy book
Unmarred by remorse or desire for another life,
Safe in that innocent land where the headsman's axe
Is the playful chopper of the nursery rhyme,
Poverty does not degrade, whippings leave no scar
And country folk sprawl content beneath the haystacks.

Soon I must return and she must awaken
To a world where men methodically torture
Their fellows, and the oppressed shiver at dawn
As the February sun's blank, watery glare
Drags from uneasy sleep those brutalized
Victims whom it may be wiser not to remember,
Since we are powerless to help, however much we care.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON

The Desert

THE sky-rimmed cliffs call out, in secret songs
declare their strength, their fired and pointed pride
flint-sharp in solitudes where sunlight clangs
with diamond din and high eagles ride.
Fire-white the stone on uninvaded hills
of ancient wilderness resounds like brass;
echoed by skies of steel the stillness peals
all daytime through its throbbing bell of glass.
Let me endure the fissured clay and rock,
the blind-faced crags and water courses dry
where the cicadas jig their frenzied scales
of glee, the lands where ghostly fingers knock
upon the dazzled brain and voices cry:
Only the void can live in our white dales!

Italy.

ROY McFADDEN

The Dog-eared Past

THERE are those who carry their past
Like business cards or pockets of change,
To be pushed across desks or counters to strange
Unbelonging fingers. Aghast,
I say that for me the tugging years
Are like a dog, of whom in name
I'm master; remembered for a game,
Forgotten then till he appears
Asleep on the floor, or, slipping tether,
Stark on the street, and I say *That's mine*:
Meaning: *I belong,* as whine
Or bark and whistle belong together.
Sometimes, dozing in a chair,
I wake to find reminding eyes
Fixed on me, and I curse and rise
And open doors into the air,
And walk through a moonless night of scampering cries.

Northern Ireland.

EDWIN BROCK

Consolation

THE time for goddesses and fairy queens has gone.
The body seldom falters now, and the heart never.
You miss nothing. The greenness was dependent on
A boyhood that has broken with the weather.

You may only listen where the ghosts have been,
And loiter now like louts who miss their point;
The magic was dependent on the green and living
Spring, which stiffens for the seasons to anoint.

Your disappointment runs along with mine,
For where I beat the ground the earth stays flat.
This winter sunshine spins another coin,
Where heads must win when hearts have come too late.

It is the way the silence on our hands hangs dead;
The way our feet are frightened to descend.
There is no wine to oil the year-old bread;
There is no spell to resurrect the end.

The time for goddesses and fairy queens has gone.
You miss nothing. Let the daylight die
On weariness that is content to live upon
The ghosts that clutter up the evening sky.

CHARLES DURANTY

In the Conifer Dark

IN the conifer dark
I am aware of pity;
of the robin,
tiny element of fire,
burning its red love
on the cold contours of snow.

So small a bird
warms the glacial air
and I am delivered back
to days of splendour
when Christmas had many servants,
decorous as novices,
carrying white wands of tallow
through high, rococo rooms.

LEONARD HARLEY

You Can't Fool the Curly Hair

YOU can't fool the curly hair
the tissues and the blood,
There's no hoax that's good
enough for bones.
They rot, transfuse, remit
their bits to make a rock
and down there, down
deeper every era
gather in their quiet chemistry.

You can't fool the curly hair, the bones,
though you hide them from the stars.
Deep they flash their rock forever.

Southern Rhodesia.

BETTY PARVIN

Mothering

BID Mary Mother take
the dove from her bosom
and set therein the snake,
broken but, scarce awake,
scorning salvation.
Would Eve's temptation
be nourished there?

Say would the fair
Maid Matron's purity
close like a blossom
round this deformity
and be his surety;
coil soul and sin together,
evil on good?

Whether she should or whether
Fearlessly should not
the beast so tether,
Christ's mother would;
for where, from such a Fall,
into what quieter spot
could the lost creature crawl?

MATTHEW SIMPSON

A Church on Fire

SPRAY from hoses was caught on the wind:
It struck the watchers, unnoticed, like rain.
Expressionless, some stood in the flames' hypnotic spell,
Entranced out of thinking, alive to sight;
Some prayed, some sobbed in the staring street.
No lips formed question-marks, demanding cause
For this red and yellow havoc in the air,
This crash and crack of timber-work.
At loss in their losing, they stood inert, or paid
Lip-service to their heart-made gods
With automatic tears and prayer.

Alien by birthright and submerged prejudice, I
Was involved in the flames' anarchic dance;
Felt, too, a causeless welling of tears
Fight my eyes' objective stare,
My observing of present, authentic fire.

But objectivity is empty and, now, denied:
I subscribe a shilling's worth of guilt to build
A brand-new church; and say, for peace,
A candle turned the fire loose.

I call the wind my brother again
In an act of expedient faith.

PHILIP GARDNER

A Survey of Kyrenia

ONCE upon a time I could have described
This place, its closed harbour calm as a rock-pool,
The castle, the half-circle of decaying houses;
At a glance, the mind coined phrases, metaphors
Flashed at me from the blue, glittering sea,
And soon each object would have been a hoarding
Plastered with my conceits—that slim white steeple
Transformed, through the prism of the poet's eye,
To a lighthouse washed continually by
Pure, scouring tides of Mediterranean air.
A stroll, a quick hour's work— I could have
Jerrybuilt my own subjective town,
Wrapping it all in light, like cellophane.

A pretty-as-a-postcard, picturesque,
But distorted landscape, superficial as
A fairground profile, charcoaled while you wait;
—A poem written by its words.
Nor more exact
The history gambit, calling up twilight ghosts
To patrol, archaic puppets, the castle walls;
Reliefing, by quotation of a date
When ships paused here, the stillness of this harbour
Where only fishing-boats tread water now—
The town a throat, tasting of centuries like wine,
As if its only flavour were the past.

These reports are interim, evade;
now, as I walk
Slowly on cobbles by the harbour basin,
No phrases, glib as saliva, slide to the tongue,
No dancing images divert my vision;

It is more drab, more difficult. Patiently,
I scan the steep dwellings with their painted shutters
(One is shored-up, a grey derelict warehouse,
Its walls dusty rubble, caved in on emptiness).
I try to feel, not see; but what I feel
Is a kind of boredom, as if the place let down
The simple expectation of the postcard,
(as if, almost, one had come to the wrong place),
Being less colourful, more subtle. Buildings,
Though waning now to sights, preserve enough
The memory of life, of use they stand for,
To pose no painter's idyll of abstract shapes.
They are not cats the tourist eye may stroke.
One strolls as if the place were nowhere special,
A town like any other; in the blank afternoon
The dusty palm-leaves in the public gardens
Droop with the dead weight of desolation
Of any out-of-season coast resort.
One misses here the tang one half-expected;
Bright light falls flat, cracks show too nakedly.

Yet this does not solve, or shelve it; one cannot quite
Discount a faint aloofness (like a snub
One affects to laugh off), completely squash
The quest, the sense of wonder. Silence inhibits
Taking for granted, feeling at home.
The harbour
Is a still blue well, the streets around
Scarce of people, the town is plainly here
But sleeps, and will not come alive; it floats
Midway between reality and dream,
And no quoit of a phrase can ring its truth.
An old schooner, mounted like a model in the lee
Of the castle bastions, poised on its keel's sharp fin,
Stripped to grey timbers by the sun and time,

Is not quite a mystery, not just a hulk.
The tall houses clustered around the harbour
Are like a theatre backcloth, a dumb chorus;
No actors bow, and speak. The senses listen:
It seems a place where something might have happened,
But nothing whispers what; all is deadpan.
The town conceals its birthmarks, its peculiar essence.

I stand at the harbour entrance, at the tip
Of the wall's pincer, gazing at town and sea.
Beyond the castle, along the bare, rocky coast,
The blue tide beats in, explosive with spray,
Pushed on a wind from shores withdrawn in haze.
The harbour is a calm annexe of that sea,
Where small boats gently rock in the water's cradle.
Tiered behind sun-stark houses, the church belfry
Rises slender as a chalk, white silhouette
Against the grey mountain wall, a jagged, reared
Comber of stone, that does not break.
The eye
Can, in its camera-view, take in the context,
Appreciate the town as point in space,
Set between mountains and the sea, a plain
Fact of geography, simple as a map.
But the mind cannot grasp it as itself,
Place it with a deeper accuracy; nor words
Salt the tail of its elusive secret.

I will not smear the inscrutable with guesses.

I could describe, but I cannot define.

Cyprus.

REVIEWS

The Chequered Shade: Reflections on Obscurity in Poetry. By John Press (O.U.P., 25s.).

THE sub-title describes the author's purpose, obscured in the main title. The purpose only incidentally includes the elucidation of specific obscurities, in the attempt to "find out some of the reasons why certain poems are obscure". With a wealth of examples and critical pronouncements drawn from sources from Spenser to Eliot, Mr. Press demonstrates that obscurity is far from being the affectation of a modern cult. He nowhere quite commits himself. We are provided with enough material and judicious guidance to answer for ourselves the questions "whether every variety of obscurity in poetry is equally undesirable" and "whether or not an element of obscurity is almost invariably found in poetry of the highest order". The form of the first question ("equally *un*desirable") will encourage the crusade against poets who hide their key and defeat the reader's research. But the case is so well presented that the most resentful objector to "clap-trap imagery" is almost persuaded that only "obscure" poetry can achieve adequate and precise statement. He is persuaded, not by Mr. Press, but by the cogency of the accumulated evidence. On the other hand, Mr. Press seems to speak for himself as well as for the baffled, resentful seeker after poetic light when he comments on MacNiece's explanation of *Hidden Ice*:

> "It is asking too much of a reader that he should intuitively divine the emotions which animate the poet. He cannot be expected to know that MacNeice considers clock-tickings and dust motes to be hypnotic and sinister. . . ."

Mr. Press wags his finger in turn at both poet and public and enjoins more charity and less arrogance on both. He explains rather than argues, and the explanations are reinforced by abundant examples carefully chosen.

> "Whether a poet is justified in withdrawing to the inner fastness of his mind, even if he thereby cuts himself off from a potential audience is a matter for debate."

The debate is not concluded, but the book is a notable contribution to it. A useful bibliography and an adequate index are provided.

ALBERT CHAPMAN

Poetry for Supper: R. S. Thomas (Hart-Davis, 9s. 6d.).
The Next Word: Thomas Blackburn (Putnam, 7s. 6d.).
Back to Life: edited by Robert Conquest (Hutchinson, 15s.).

THOSE readers who enjoyed Mr. Thomas's first book of poems, *Song at the Year's Turning,* will find much to admire and appreciate in his second, *Poetry for Supper.* Mr. Thomas is a regional poet in the best sense of the description; he uses his local environment (Wales) and sketches of local characters to demonstrate truthsof a universal application. But he is more concerned with people than with place, with Chapel Deacons and labourers, Welsh farmers and their wives or, more specifically, with Iago Prytherch, Ap Huw, Lowri Dafydd and Evans. His language and style are admirably suited to his subjects, and though most of his poems are short, he manages to say a great deal in them—not, it is true, about war or politics or atom bombs, but about the life and outlook and emotions of the men and women around him, from first-hand observation :

> "If you had spared from your long store
> Of days lavished upon the land
> But one for her where she lay fallow,
> Drying, hardening, withering to waste.
> But now—too late! You're an old tree,
> Your roots groping in her in vain."
>
> *Age*

Mr. Blackburn adopts a more indirect approach which enables him to deal objectively with personal problems that concern us all, and he makes skilful use of myths, dreams and fairy stories, to achieve his effects, as in *The Lucky Marriage* :

> "I mean the elder son and cherished sister
> Know but the surface of each common day;
> It takes the cunning eye of the rejected
> To dip beneath the skin of shadow-play
> And come into the meaning of a landscape.
> I think that every bird and casual stone
> Are syllables thrust down from some broad language
> That we must ravel out and make our own.
> Yet who is ever turned toward that journey
> Till deprivations riddle through the heart?
> And so I praise the goose-girl and the scullion
> Beside a midden or a refuse cart."

It is this constant search for a meaning in experience that distinguishes his poetry from that of his contemporaries and adds real significance to his present preoccupations. As he remarks in another poem, "each intricate dream that swings round / Into the light, must conjure up / Its ghosts from underground" and he has the poetic craftsmanship, the verbal ingenuity, and intellectual equipment to bring his ghosts to life so that we recognise them despite their various disguises. When Mr. Blackburn is sufficiently removed from his subject to be able to approach it directly, as in *Hospital for Defectives*, he can be very moving indeed.

Back to Life is a collection of poems written and published during 1955 and 1956 (the period of comparative relaxation of literary censorship) by the poets of countries behind the Iron Curtain. In his extremely interesting and well-balanced Introduction, Mr. Conquest tells us that his anthology "is not presented as literature, and much of its quality inevitably fails to come through . . . but if these translations were much less effective as literature, they would still be extraordinarily valuable as documents." Few editors can have been so much to the point in the assessment of their own labours. For the importance of this collection lies not in its poetic value, but in its power to undo all that conventional propaganda has done, and help us to see the people of the Iron Curtain countries as human beings. There are some fine poems, such as Adam Wazyk's *Poem for Adults*, Semyon Kirsanov's *Seven Days of the Week* and Margarita Aliger's *The Most Important Thing*, but it is the weight and tone and poignancy of the collection as a whole, and the courage of its authors, which impress one most of all. For many of the poets represented here are Communist in belief, accepting the ideals of Communism and revolting (not *too* openly, of course) against the conditions created by the Party and betrayal of the ideals. Wazyk provides the keynote:

> "They lived with the dawn
> And have sown darkness.
> They lived with the idea
> And they parted the people.
> They lived with a dream
> And lies have become their daily bread."

Perhaps it is unnecessary to mention that most of the poets, and the editors who published them, have since been censured for their "anti-artistic, anti-aesthetic or ideologically pernicious" work.

JOHN SEYMOUR.

Interim Report: Tom Wright (New Orleans Poetry Journal, $1).
Time is as Time Does: Elizabeth Young (Putnam, 7s. 6d.).
Eternity is Swift: W. H. Boore (Mitre Press, 6s.).
In Another Room: Peter Champkin (Linden Press, 7s. 6d.).
Poetry Los Angeles (Villiers Publications, unpriced).

A FELLOW-POET once told me, "You should never use 'I' in your work", and my reply was unprintable. Reading Mr. Wright's work, though, it is possible to see what he meant. To use the personal pronoun in a poem should, I believe, imply that the poet has arrived at an integrated conception of what the cypher stands for, and be capable of translating it. I's and me's recur throughout *Interim Report,* yet one has no very clear picture of the personality behind them. It is a shame, for the poems are otherwise attractive; but it is perhaps no coincidence that the title-poem, one of the best, speaks entirely about someone else.

There is an informing personality throughout Miss Young's book—though it is one which seldom obtrudes in the shape of pronouns. Instead it will, at the drop of a hat, discourse on themes as disparate as Persian sweetmeats and suicide. Yet what one might have felt inclined to salute as a brave eclecticism palls because the tone of voice remains so similar throughout. Thus we must wait patiently for a right subject for her rather thoughtful style before we are treated to a poem which satisfies.

The word 'traditional' on the jacket of a book of poetry is beginning now to assume the overtones of its 'experimental' counterpart during the 'thirties; in other words, it is used not as a means of classification but to imply a quality. Mr. Boore's work is called traditional, but a more accurate description would be 'poetic'. In choice of theme and style he veers towards the poetic, and is not always able to escape its great danger: a sound of insincerity. When he feels truly and describes honestly—as in the poem *John,* written on the death of a day-old son—he is most moving:

> "He was completed in his last swift breath.
> This much remains—that we accomplished him."

There are two contending speakers in Mr. Chamkin's poetry: one, a rhetorical Eliot; the other, more attractive and more, I suspect, Mr. Champkin, a wry and oddly oriental commentator. From the latter comes *Evidence,* which begins:

"I joined the Bank in, let me see,
nineteen hundred and thirty four;
not because of a woman's eyes
nor, candidly speaking, for God's sake."

and *Dawn at Oberglogau*, which ends:

"Some great purpose stirs
to view the unwholesome scene,
but turns,
and goes to sleep again."

Poetry Los Angeles represents work heard during the past year at public readings of Poetry Los Angeles. The poems, which have been chosen by the authors, do not pretend to subscribe to any common purpose and, indeed, often have little in common. There is a diversity of talent here, all of it competent but little of it outstanding.

EDWIN BROCK

Enchant with Plainsong: Olive Walker, 16 pp. 3s.
Before the Storm: 12 pp. 2s. 6d. Michael De-La-Noy.
London Sonnets and Other Poems: Edith Blake. 12 pp. 2s. 6d.
Brief Matchlight: Arnold Vincent Bowen. 12 pp. 2s. 6d.
Unfamiliar Mountain: Carla Lanyon Lanyon. 16 pp. 3s.
Freedom of the City: Irene Claremont de Castillejo. 32 pp. 5s.

Published by
OUTPOSTS
PUBLICATIONS

IT IS both interesting and pleasing to find that none of the six poets in this list adopts the style, tone or technique of any particular school or group, and none of them betrays an undue influence, though it is possible to trace affinities here and there. What faults or virtues they possess are their own. One can only hope that more poets will have the courage to stand on their own feet, for we certainly need more of this variety in poetry today.

Miss Olive Walker writes unrhymed verse and depends upon her sense of rhythm for her effects. In a long poem entitled *As the Clay* she describes the process of turning clay into pottery with

striking realism, but it is all a little too earthy and the metaphor tacked on in the last few lines, adding the obvious moral about humanity, seems something of an afterthought. There is authentic poetry in her shorter poems. Mr. De-La-Noy, on the other hand, needs a more ambitious approach to his work. He has original ideas and knows how to use language, but tends to dissipate his poetic energy in describing snippets of experience which leave the reader in the air. *What Fun to be Psychoneurotic* shows that he has a satirical vein worth exploiting, but in fairness to his talent he should allow himself more elbow room.

The *London Sonnets* of Miss Edith Blake are skilful, unpretentious and enjoyable. Miss Blake's subjects are usually scenes in and around London at various times and seasons, and she manages to evade the straitjacket which the sonnet form becomes for so many unwary poets. Despite her almost journalistic gift for summarising a situation, the best poems in her collection are the two character sketches, *The Village Shoemender* and *The Organist.*

Brief Matchlight is an appropriate title for the second booklet by Arnold Vincent Bowen to appear in this series, for it could be applied to the brief career of this talented poet who died before he had accomplished what lay in his power :

> "While Time burns his small box of matches up
> I write my songs upon the timeless air. . . ."

In this small collection there is a surprisingly wide range—nature poems, wartime poems, love poems, philosophical poems, a passionately religious poem, and an unusual lyric hinting almost of a homosexual relationship. Those who know Mr. Bowen's work will wish to own *Brief Matchlight*; those who don't are now provided with the opportunity they have missed.

With eight collections of poetry and a novel to her credit, Miss Lanyon can properly be referred to as an established poet, but it is to be regretted that her work has not, so far, been given the recognition it deserves. There are sixteen poems in *Unfamiliar Mountain*, all of such a consistently high standard of craftsmanship, and all of such interest, that it is difficult to select lines for quotation. Readers of OUTPOSTS will remember *To My Godson* :

> "May you hear sometimes, in those unrecorded hours
> Between midnight and morning, when old men die

And young men dance and babes whimper for the breast,
Hear the pity-filled laughter of angels
For all that masculine magnificence, the pomp
Of epaulets and orders, mitre, gown and wig
To clothe the uncertain, shivering naked form
Of man, proud man."

Freedom of the City is another excellent title. Taken from a love poem—

"Let me break the chains that bind you,
Every claim the law condones
Or my devotion warrants,
While giving you the freedom of my city."

—it provides the key to most of the poems included in this collection. Impressive though Miss Castillejo undoubtedly is, she is at her strongest when dealing with what might be described as primary feminine instincts. There are a number of poems here, the *Eve* series, which run through the whole gamut of emotions and conflicts and leave practically nothing unsaid. Miss Castillejo's work is new to me, but I hope to see more of it in the future.

MARGARET KING

NOTICES

POEMS INVITED. Contributions are invited for a well-known national magazine for whom Howard Sergeant acts as Poetry Editor. Lyrical poems (having a direct impact upon the reader) and light and humorous poems should be sent, together with a stamped addressed envelope, to Howard Sergeant at the *Outposts* address. Generous payment. Length not more than 20 lines.

OUTPOSTS PUBLICATIONS. The latest additions to the *Outposts* Modern Poets series are : *Not From This Night* by Isabel M. Clark, *Those Broken Journeys* by Arnold Vincent Bowen, *The Deserted Vicarage* by Philip Gardner, *Silver Wyre* by Olive Culshaw, and *Jon Smith at the Wars* by Walter Lorimer. See publication list for details.

THE HEADLANDS, poems by Howard Sergeant (published by Putnam & Co. Ltd.) can be ordered through local booksellers or

obtained from this address, price 7s. 6d. (8s. including postage). "Those who despair of the aims and values of modern poetry should ponder Mr. Sergeant and think again."—*Contemporary Review.*

MAVERICKS. A few copies of the second impression of the anthology, *Mavericks,* edited by Dannie Abse and Howard Sergeant, are available at the *Outposts* address. Price 6s. 6d. including postage.

ENVOI

Poetry Quarterly

Price 2s.

Issue No. 7—February, No. 8—May. Sample free.

MSS invited

Obtainable from :

"Seven Levels", North Place, Cheltenham.